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Elimination of racism and racial discrimination: elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Letter dated 30 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of a decision (see annex I) and a statement (see annex II) by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation issued "In connection with the flagrant violations of human rights and the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Latvia".

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and the annexes thereto as a document of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session under agenda item 115 (a).

(*Signed*) Sergey **Lavrov**

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Annex I to the letter dated 30 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Decision of the State Duma

Statement by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in connection with the flagrant violations of human rights and the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Latvia

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation **decides**:

1. To adopt the statement by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation "In connection with the flagrant violations of human rights and the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Latvia".

2. To transmit this decision and the aforementioned statement to Mr. V. V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation, the Government of the Russian Federation, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliaments of the States members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the Chairman of the Council of the Baltic States and the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

3. To transmit this decision and the aforementioned statement to the *Parliamentary Gazette* for official publication.

4. This decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

G. N. **Seleznev**
Chairman of the State Duma of the
Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

Moscow
14 October 2003

Annex II to the letter dated 30 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the State Duma in connection with the flagrant violations of human rights and the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Latvia

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation expresses its deep concern in connection with the continuing discriminatory policy of the leadership of the Republic of Latvia with regard to national minorities living in that country.

Despite the many recommendations of such authoritative international organs and organizations as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the Council of the Baltic States concerning the need for Latvia to guarantee the whole range of rights of national minorities and integrate into Latvian society, approximately half a million inhabitants of the State are still not citizens of the Republic of Latvia. These people have been restricted with regard to in their right to work, health care, education, freedom of movement and standard social security. After the adoption in 1999 of the Act of the Republic of Latvia "On the State language", the Russian language, which was the native language of 36 per cent of the population of Latvia, became a foreign language. The assurances given by the Latvian leaders of their intention to act in strict accordance with international standards with regard to respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities are contradicted by their actions. The so-called government programme on the integration of society in Latvia is actually aimed at the forced assimilation of national minorities. The appeal of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to ratify the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, signed by Latvia as early as 1995, is still being disregarded.

The fact that the so-called non-citizens of Latvia, who comprise almost one third of its population, are deprived of the right to participate in the elections of organs at all levels is a glaring example of the flouting of democracy in Europe today.

The deputies of the State Duma are convinced that the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia which was elected under those conditions in October 2002 and the Government of the Republic of Latvia which was subsequently formed can hardly be regarded as fully legitimate and as representing the interests of the whole population of Latvia. In response to the objective and principled assessment of the events taking place in Latvia given by Russian parliamentarians, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia made unequivocal and, in essence, provocative threats that bilateral relations would be adversely affected.

Such discriminatory measures are carried out against a background of tolerance on the part of the leaders of Latvia of the attempts by Latvian revanchists to review the results of the Second World War, to rehabilitate the local Fascist accomplices and to present the liberation of Latvia by the Red Army as the beginning of a "second occupation". The Latvian leaders are not only not impeding the holding of events in praise of Latvian Fascists, but are personally participating in

them. For example, on 27 September 2002, Mr. I. Ribene, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, and Mr. R. Graube, Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia for questions relating to integration with NATO, took part in a "ceremony to mark the opening and consecration" of a memorial cemetery near Riga for Latvian legionaries who fought with the Waffen SS. In the opinion of the deputies of the State Duma, by that very act these State figures placed themselves on the same footing as the shameless revanchists, publicly mocking the victims of fascism.

At the same time, the Latvian judicial organs organize mock trials of those who fought against Hitler's troops and the traitors to their country. The latest disturbing event of this kind was the decision of the Zemgal area court to sentence an 82-year-old veteran of the Great Patriotic War, Mr. N. A. Larionov, to five years' imprisonment for genocide. In this connection, a most flagrant violation of human rights is taking place in that the laws adopted in Latvia which define genocide in a manner that is not consistent with the categorization of genocide in international law are being made retroactive.

The deputies of the State Duma do not understand how all these processes taking place in Latvia are outside the field of vision of the high-ranking representatives of the Commission of the European Communities who are supervising the entry of Latvia into the European Union. Such short-sightedness is evidence of their readiness to expand the European Union at any cost, to the detriment of its high reputation, by admitting to membership States whose policies are in no way in accordance with the rules and standards concerning respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities. The deputies of the State Duma state that, in considering the documents submitted to the State Duma for ratification concerning the accession of Latvia to the Agreement on partnership and cooperation, establishing partnership between the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and the European Communities and their member States, on the other, the State Duma will determine whether it is advisable to ratify them depending on whether Latvia fulfils its obligations concerning respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities. In this context, consideration should be given to the question of whether it is possible for any international treaties concerning the State frontier to be concluded between the Russian Federation and Latvia.

While the deputies of the State Duma note the consistent efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to protect Russian fellow citizens in Latvia, they nevertheless consider that, in their work in that area, the federal organs of executive power should use all available means provided for in international law and the legislation of the Russian Federation, including the federal Act on the State policy of the Russian Federation towards fellow citizens overseas.

The deputies of the State Duma consider it expedient for the implementation of decision No. 225-III GD of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 5 April 2000 and decision No. 226-III GD of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 5 April 2000 to ask the Committee of the State Duma for the Commonwealth of Independent States and ties with fellow citizens to prepare for a second reading of the draft federal law "On measures by the Russian Federation to prevent the violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens of the Russian Federation and Russian fellow citizens in the Republic of Latvia" and the draft federal law "On measures to provide humanitarian assistance

to citizens of the Russian Federation and Russian fellow citizens who are permanently resident in Latvia, in connection with the mass violations of human rights and the rights of the Russian people in the Republic of Latvia".

The deputies of the State Duma welcome the adoption on 9 October 2003 by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg of a decision in the case of T. Slivenko and others against the Republic of Latvia, complaint No. 48321/99, and express the hope that that judicial decision will be enforced and that the precedent which it sets will lead to strict compliance by Latvia with the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which forbids discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, membership of a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Moscow
14 October 2003